

**FOSTERING COLLECTIVE ACTION:
SOLUTIONS TO HOMELESSNESS
AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN
SASKATOON**

Extension Proposal for the
City of Saskatoon

August 2022



SASKATOON
HOUSING
INITIATIVES
PARTNERSHIP

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Since 2008, the Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership Inc. (SHIP) has been operating under an agreement with the City of Saskatoon to provide services related to affordable housing, such as business planning and the implementation of Saskatoon's Homelessness Action Plan (Action Plan). The most recent five-year agreement was renewed in May 2017 and expired on April 30, 2022.

During the life of the most recent agreement, SHIP was able to deliver substantial return on investment for all five of the established deliverables to the City of Saskatoon:

- Project development assistance to increase the housing supply;
- Providing a homelessness report card;
- Organizing an annual conference on homelessness and affordable housing;
- Provision of support for the Saskatoon Cold Weather Strategy; and
- Facilitation of Collective Action Team meetings and information sharing.

To expand this track record of success, SHIP is proposing a 16-month agreement to carry out the deliverables described in this proposal and to continue discussions around long-term housing activities in Saskatoon throughout 2023 which would look to define future service needs.

Sincerely,

Priscilla Johnstone
Executive Director
Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership



HOUSING NEEDS



Over the past decade, Saskatoon has undergone unprecedented economic and population growth due largely to high commodity prices. Beyond the new demands for housing are demographic shifts including an aging population, an increase in university students, and additional specialized housing support requirements.

Since 2016, the average price of resale housing in Saskatoon has increased, from \$335,580 to \$373,000 at the end of December 2021, according to the Canadian Real Estate Association. Combined with the rapidly rising costs of materials and labour due to inflation and supply chain issues, the average new home price is making access to the housing market challenging for those moving through the housing continuum.

The rental housing market is equally as challenged. Since 2016, the average rent of a two bedroom apartment in Saskatoon has increased from \$1,100 per month to \$1,183 in 2022 according to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) Rental Market Report. Further, the average rent for a newly completed two-bedroom apartment and townhouse is \$1,437. According to the same report, income levels and the supply of purpose-built rental housing units are not keeping pace. As a result, the vacancy rate in Saskatoon is currently reported in CMHC's Rental Market Report to be 4.8%.

From the same CMHC report, we're seeing an estimated 7.5% of the rental stock would be affordable to renter households in the first 20% of the income distribution with less than \$31,000 annual come. Only 14% of these units had one bedroom, while less than 1% had two bedrooms. Of rental stock, 56% would be affordable to renter households in the first 40% of the income distribution (less than \$48,000 of annual income). Among these, 23% had three or more bedrooms. Overall, rental market affordability remains a challenge for households in lower-income quintiles, especially those seeking larger bedroom units

As housing has become increasingly unaffordable across the spectrum, the Point in Time Count of Homeless Individuals and Families in Saskatoon showed 550 individuals experiencing homelessness in 2022, up 16% from 475 in 2015. However, this number doesn't capture the full picture, as it is only a small portion of the individuals experiencing homelessness in our city, as various factors can contribute to the accuracy of the count, including the number of volunteers available, the movement of those experiencing homelessness in and out of the region before or after the count, and those who are outside of the catchment area for the count.

There are currently 4,500 affordable rental housing units in Saskatoon. However, according to the modelling in the June 2021 Affordable Housing Inventory & Needs Report, there must be an investment in the creation of at least 178 new units of affordable housing every year to meet demand. Yet, over the past eight years, the average new investment has been only 81 new units per year according to our 2021 Affordable Housing Inventory and Needs Report. As a result, the waitlist for affordable housing in certain complexes is now measured in multiple years, not months.



ABOUT SHIP



Saskatoon Housing Initiative Partnership is a community-based organization that strives to increase the supply of affordable and appropriate housing options. Our vision is that Saskatoon has affordable and appropriate housing options for all its citizens, and our mission is to foster collective action that creates solutions to homelessness and affordable housing in Saskatoon.

Since 1999, SHIP has worked as a “one-stop-shop” with the private sector, builders and developers, along with affordable housing groups, to assist in delivering affordable housing units to market in Saskatoon. By providing technical assistance, resources and information, as well as project development services, SHIP’s activities have resulted in the successful development of hundreds of affordable housing units in Saskatoon. Furthermore, since 2012, SHIP has invested in affordable housing services as the community entity of the Government of Canada’s Homelessness Partnering Strategy funding for the City of Saskatoon.

Since 2008, SHIP has been operating under an agreement with the City of Saskatoon to provide services related to affordable housing, such as business planning and the implementation of the Action Plan.

INDIGENOUS LENS

It is abundantly clear, based on the Homelessness Report Card, that Indigenous and Metis residents of Saskatoon are disproportionately represented amongst the City’s homeless population. In response to this, we are committed to the Truth & Reconciliation call to action #92 that calls for a commitment to meaningful consultation and building a respectful relationship with Indigenous people. To respond to this call we’ve taken the following actions:

- We created an Indigenous committee, comprised of four female elders, for consultation towards working with an Indigenous lens. The program is new, and we are establishing a protocol for their engagement. The initiative has a lot of potential to be instrumental in our future Indigenous Engagement work that we do as an organization. Most recently, we engaged our Indigenous committee with our most recent Point in Time count.
- We’ve also identified key Indigenous stakeholders and individuals to consult on our work. Further, we are making an effort to recruit and retain Indigenous employees in order to ensure an Indigenous lens is applied to all of our work.

While the typical definition of homelessness is lacking a physical structure, the Action Plan is undergirded by an interconnected Indigenous lens articulated by Jesse Thistle, that Indigenous homelessness is “about the disconnection from things like spirituality, the family, land, to each other, to cosmology, to Creator.”



PERFORMANCE RESULTS



DELIVERABLE	COMMENTARY / RESULT
<p>Project development assistance to increase the housing supply by a minimum of 35 units.</p>	<p>SHIP has collaborated with a number of organizations and programs to support the development of over 300 housing units over five years both within and out of scope of this contract.</p> <p>In 2020 alone, SHIP assisted six non-profit housing providers and two private builders in the preliminary planning stages of housing projects that together have the potential to create over 100 units of affordable housing in Saskatoon.</p>
<p>Homelessness Report Card</p>	<p>Delivered to the City of Saskatoon in early 2022, SHIP's housing case management statistics for 2020-21 summarized in brief:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total clients – 415 individuals, 58% identified as female, 79% disclosed that they are of First Nations or Metis descent, 18% did not identify being of a visual minority • Housed clients – 205 individuals • Cases closed – 177 individuals • Youth clients – 33 individuals under age 25 • Eviction support clients – 10 individuals • Referral demographics – 30% families, 58% singles, 5% seniors, 8% youth • Referral source of income – 36% were receiving Assured Income Disability with Income Assistance, 30% were receiving Income Support with Income Assistance, 12% were receiving the Canada Emergency Response Benefit, 5% were receiving the Canada Pension Plan, 11% were receiving Employment Insurance, 4% were receiving Provincial Training Allowance or National Student Loans while only 1% were receiving the Canada Child Tax Benefit as their sole income.



PERFORMANCE RESULTS



<p>Organization of a conference on Homelessness and Affordable Housing</p>	<p>SHIP is proud to host the Innovative Approaches to Housing & Homelessness Conference in Saskatoon. The 2021 conference included speakers from Silver Sage Housing Corporation, EGADZ & OUTSaskatoon and CMHC, to name a few. The conference brought 203 people representing various stakeholders together to learn about and discuss housing and homelessness in Saskatchewan. SHIP partners were more involved in the conference planning process than in previous years and this helped in developing a program that was relevant and informative for attendees.</p>
<p>Provision of Support for the Saskatoon Cold Weather Strategy Team</p>	<p>In November 2021, SHIP reached out to community outreach teams. Within one month, four full-time community outreach teams began to work the Cold Weather Strategy: STR8UP, John Howard Society Outreach, EGADZ Outreach and Community Support Officers. The cumulative output of these organizations each sending two knowledgeable frontline workers allowed for non-traditional hours of operations.</p> <p>The Friendship Inn offered their building, so SHIP provided two staff to build a warm-up Navigation Centre, bringing individuals indoors while waiting to call through to Emergency After Hours, connect with emergency shelters and outreach organizations, as well as coordinate transportation and hotels for individuals on the service review lists.</p> <p>Between December 5, 2021, and March 4, 2022, 459 individuals required a Cold Weather Shelter during extreme weather, with the majority (232) requiring support during the January 18th – 20th cold snap. 53% of individuals required support identified as male, and two-thirds reported a wait time of 10 minutes or less from their engagement with a front line worker to being placed in a safe shelter for the night. This coordinated effort ensured that no lives were lost in the extreme cold due to the success of this strategy.</p>
<p>Facilitation of Collective Action Team meetings and information sharing.</p>	<p>SHIP engaged a variety of community organizations holding conversations and collaborative meetings to mitigate homelessness or precariously housed people in Saskatchewan. For example, we collaborated with community organizations on the Cold Weather Strategy, Hot Weather Strategy and the 2022 Point in Time homelessness count which included multiple stakeholders.</p>



MUNICIPAL ALIGNMENT



Based on the City of Saskatoon’s Housing Business Plan 2013 – 2022, there remains a high degree of alignment between SHIP and the City of Saskatoon in respect to housing priorities and initiatives.

The municipal role is clearly defined as “working with other levels of government, the private sector, and community organization to focus its available resources and efforts to meet needs across the housing continuum” (p.2).

Partnering with SHIP has clearly met the City’s core strategies in several ways:

- Through the provision of technical resources in respect to municipal capital grants, tax abatements and permitting, SHIP has been able to reduce barriers to the provision of a wide range of housing choices and addressed impediments to approvals.
- By engaging with a variety of public, private and community-based organizations, SHIP has been able to help encourage others to take action to address affordable housing needs.
- SHIP has consistently been participating in housing research and monitoring activities to provide current and relevant information on housing conditions in Saskatoon.
- SHIP has supported housing education and awareness programs by leading a Housing Sector Process Mapping report to take a closer look at the City’s housing sector system.

The alignment between SHIP and the municipality extends beyond priorities and strategies as it is ingrained in our organizational framework. The City is represented on the SHIP board by one (1) City Councillor and one (1) city staff member.

FINANCIAL REQUEST

Homelessness Action Plan Service Agreement		
Period	September 1, 2022 to December 31, 2022	January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2023
Totals	\$43,333	\$130,000

DISBURSEMENT SCHEDULE

SHIP will continue to provide quarterly invoices to the City of Saskatoon throughout the proposed extension period. A summary of SHIP’s operations based on services detailed in this proposal will accompany each payment request.



VALUE PROPOSITION



Since 2015, SHIP has housed 1,870 individuals in housing placement programs. 619 of these individuals were children.

In 2020-21 alone, SHIP directly housed 168 individuals. Furthermore, SHIP's COVID-19 Housing Case Managers positively impacted the lives of over 600 people including the provision of referrals, assisting with applications for housing and related programs, and helping people navigate complex systems through multiple barriers.

In addition, SHIP has invested over \$5.5 million on behalf of two major federal programs:

- 1) Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy; and
- 2) COVID-19 Response. These dollars supported Saskatoon-based agencies, supporting efforts in homelessness, poverty and housing insecurity issues.

SHIP has also recently entered into a partnership with CMHC and the City of Saskatoon to implement the Housing Solutions Lab which will build prototype ideas that address needs of individuals with intersecting challenges while also proposing new ways of collaborating with the housing system in Saskatoon. This research and work will provide additional value to addressing housing and homelessness in the city.

RECOMMENDATION

That the City of Saskatoon approve an additional 16 month operating agreement extension for a total of \$173,333 with SHIP that includes the following conditions:

1. Term to be extended to December 31, 2023 to align with city budget planning.
2. SHIP to continue submitting a report on deliverables consisting of the following:
 - Project development assistance to increase the units of affordable housing supply;
 - A homelessness report card;
 - Organization of an annual conference on Homelessness and Affordable Housing;
 - Provision of support for the Saskatoon Cold Weather Strategy team; and
 - Facilitation of Collective Action Teams meetings and information sharing in support of SHIP initiatives.

